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3) Futenma relocation: Gov't to propose Camp Schwab inland plan to U.S. next month

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

On the pending issue of relocating the heliport functions of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from its current location in Japan's southernmost island prefecture of Okinawa, the government will formally propose its most promising plan to the U.S. government in March. This Futenma relocation plan, revealed yesterday, is to build a 500-meter-long tarmac on the premises of Camp Schwab, another U.S. military base straddling the Henoko area of the prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago and other municipalities in the prefecture, and to train Okinawa-based Marine Corps troops on other islands in Japan. The U.S. government, however, is expected to oppose this plan for such reasons as a possible impact on the training exercises. The government is therefore considering

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proposing another plan as the second best one, which is to construct a 1,500-meter-long airstrip in an inland area of the base.

Defense Minister Kitazawa attended a party held yesterday in Tokyo for a House of Representatives member of the People's New Party, one of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan's two coalition partners, where he touched on the PNP's advocacy of this relocation plan and revealed that the government was considering a plan to relocate the Futenma airfield facility to an inland area of Camp Schwab as the most promising plan. "The PNP's direction is basically the same (as mine)," Kitazawa said, "and we're now moving in that direction."

The idea of building a land-based replacement facility for Futenma airfield on the premises of Camp Schwab was once discussed at a bilateral consultative meeting between the Japanese and U.S. governments in 2005. At the time, the U.S. government rejected the idea, reasoning that the U.S. military's training exercises would be affected and that Futenma relocation to Camp Schwab's inland area would end up increasing aircraft noise and environmental deterioration. At that time, the U.S. government pointed to technical drawbacks, asserting that it would be difficult to use the shooting range on Camp Schwab. The Japanese government is therefore considering building a shooting range on another U.S. military base in Okinawa Prefecture at its own expense.

Specifically, the Japanese government is considering the island of Tokunoshima in Kagoshima Prefecture and outlying islands in Okinawa Prefecture as candidate sites for training exercises.

However, the U.S. government is highly likely to disapprove of any other plans, maintaining that the current relocation plan to relocate Futenma airfield to a coastal area of Camp Schwab based on a 2006 bilateral agreement is the best option. Meanwhile, Okinawa Prefecture and Nago City have been calling for the Futenma facility to be relocated outside Japan or outside Okinawa. The leaders of three local communities, including Nago City's Henoko district, filed a petition with the government yesterday against the option of building a land-based facility on Camp Schwab.

4) Futenma relocation: U.S. negative on inland siting option

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

The government is giving heed to the idea of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma airfield facility from its current location in Okinawa Prefecture's central city of Ginowan to an inland area of Camp Schwab, another U.S. military base straddling the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago and other municipalities in the prefecture. This inland plan has now become the most likely option. This is because that inland area is geographically close to Camp Schwab's coastal area, the currently planned relocation site for Futenma airfield under an intergovernmental agreement reached between Japan and the United States. The government judged that it can easily make to the United States the claim that the U.S. military will be able to maintain its deterrence even if Futenma

airfield is relocated to the inland area.

The idea of siting an alternative facility for Futenma airfield in an inland area of Camp Schwab is now being mulled by Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano and Defense Minister Kitazawa. In the government, however, few believe that the U.S. government will accept a plan

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other than the current one to relocate the Futenma airfield to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in the city of Nago, which is based on an intergovernmental agreement of 2006. The government is therefore looking into the feasibility of two options: 1) building a 500-meter-long runway in an inland area of Camp Schwab and relocating to Japan's outlying islands the on-base training exercises for which this runway is too short; and 2) constructing a 1,500-meter-long airstrip in an inland area of Camp Schwab. The government is thinking of proposing the second option should the U.S. government reject the first one.

However, the U.S. government has been consistently negative about the option of laying down a land-based tarmac on the premises of Camp Schwab. Besides, Okinawa is strongly opposed to relocation of the Futenma facility to Nago. A senior Defense Ministry official said: "In the end, the Futenma airfield will remain where it is" if the inland plan is rejected. There is growing resignation.

5) SDP will also propose Futenma relocation sites within Japan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

The proposals to be submitted by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to the Okinawa base issues examination committee of the government and the ruling parties on the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) have been revealed. While its first option is relocation out of Japan to the U.S. territory of Guam or Tinian in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, relocation out of Okinawa to mainland Japan will also be included if the first option is not approved. Coordination is underway to identify six or seven specific relocation sites within the country.

The SPD's proposals will consist of a Plan A - relocation to Guam or Tinian, Plan B - relocation to Guam plus rotation of training exercises on mainland Japan, and Plan C - relocation to mainland Japan. Plans A and B will require the building of infrastructure in the relocation sites or providing high-speed ships to the U.S. forces for troop transfers.

Plan C calls for selecting the relocation site from Self-Defense Forces bases or local airports outside of Okinawa. The use of the new U.S. military facility will be limited to 15 years or so. The eastern area of Tomakomai (Hokkaido), the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Omura air base (Nagasaki Prefecture), Saga airport (Saga Prefecture), and other locations have emerged as candidate sites, but there are objections in the party to naming specific localities.

All three plans will allow ad hoc use of the Futenma Air Station for the U.S. forces' training and supplies or in an emergency even after the base's closure. They also call for the deployment of the Ground Self-Defense Force to provide deterrence after the U.S. Marines are withdrawn from Okinawa.

The SDP had planned to only submit plans for relocation out of Japan, but the party's executive meeting on Feb. 25 authorized SDP members of the examination committee to submit plans for relocation to the Japanese mainland as their personal proposals.

6) Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano tells SDP leader Futenma relocation decision will be made by May

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

February 26, 2010

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano had dinner with Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Mizuho Fukushima at a Japanese restaurant in Tokyo on the evening of Feb. 25. The two discussed the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa and other issues. Hirano told Fukushima that a relocation site "will be selected by May; this is an issue that bears on the fate of the administration." At a news conference on Feb. 24, Fukushima made comments on the deadline for making a decision, saying "the timing is secondary to a true solution to the problem."

Fukushima stressed (at the dinner) that "great consideration should be given to the feelings of the Okinawan people," but Hirano responded with, "We will study the issue from scratch."

7) Discussions begin on "sympathy budget"

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

The governments of Japan and the United States conducted a mini-Security Subcommittee meeting of foreign and defense officials at the Foreign Ministry yesterday. The event is part of talks to deepen the bilateral alliance on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The two countries have also begun discussions on a review of Japan's host nation support (omoiyari yosan, literally "sympathy budget") for U.S. forces in Japan.

8) Japan, U.S. to discuss Iranian nuclear issue next week

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

The governments of Japan and the United States yesterday started making arrangements for a plan to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue in Tokyo next week. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg is expected to visit Japan on March 4 and hold talks with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and other officials.

9) Toyota to call on U.S. auto industrial group for joint probe of electronic throttle-control system problem

YOMIURI (Top Play) (Excerpt)  
February 26, 2010

Toyota Motor Corp. revealed yesterday that it would ask the American Automobile Manufacturers Association to jointly probe the problem of the electronic throttle-control system (ETCS). The ETCS is a suspected cause of the problem of unintended sudden acceleration, which has caused accidents. Toyota aims to regain consumers' trust by conducting a more objective joint investigation with a third-party organization to which rival companies belong. There have also been complaints of sudden acceleration in the case of other manufacturers' cars. Therefore Toyota intends to call on the U.S. association to jointly probe ETCS problems of other companies' vehicles as well.

10) Transport minister: I am not worried about impact of Toyota

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issue on Japan-U.S. relations

MAINICHI (Page 4) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Seiji Maehara spoke yesterday on Toyota Motor corp. President Akio Toyoda's testimony before a U.S. congressional committee: "It was very good that he attended the hearing." In reference to the impact of the Toyota recall issue on Japan-U.S. relations: he said: "I met U.S. Ambassador John Roos the other day, and we affirmed that this issue should not be allowed to distort free trade between Japan and the U.S. I am not worried (about a negative impact)."

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Masayuki Naoshima also commented: "The president offered his sincere apology." But he added: "I think it will take a little more time" until the criticism in the U.S. calms down.

11) Government to aim at acceding to Hague Convention; Hatoyama orders legislative measures

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

Given the increasing number of cases in which a Japanese parent moves a child outside the country without the consent of the other parent after an international marriage ends in divorce, the government decided yesterday to aim at acceding swiftly to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which prescribes a system to return the abducted child to the country of his or her habitual residence. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, calling Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Justice Minister Keiko Chiba to the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) yesterday, instructed them to expedite the process of establishing a law specifying a set of procedures for reclaiming abducted children.

"The world is beginning to regard Japan as a peculiar country," the Prime Minister said to the press corps at the Kantei last night. "It is important to reach a conclusion as soon as possible regarding the Hague Convention in order to show that is not the case." He also said, "It is not possible to do so during the current Diet session," indicating that Japan's accession to the pact will not occur until 2011 or later.

The Hague Convention was adopted by the Hague Conference on Private International Law in 1980 and it entered into force in 1983. Eighty-one countries, including the United States and European countries, are signatories to the convention. Japan alone among the group of seven industrialized countries has not signed the treaty. The United States and European countries have repeatedly urged the Japanese government to accede to the convention.

During his visit to Japan earlier this month, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell pressed Tokyo to swiftly join the convention, saying: "The U.S. Congress, too, is concerned about the matter. It might escalate into a major issue in U.S.-Japan relations."

At the same time, there are many hurdles before acceding to the convention. Domestic violence by the former husband is said to be

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behind many cases of child abduction.

Cautious views are dominant in the government. In Japan custody of the child is often awarded to the mother after a marriage ends in divorce. Another hurdle is the difference in views of the family between Japan and Western countries. "The situation in Japan is such that it can't accede to the convention for a year or two," a Foreign Ministry official said.

12) METI to draw up vision for industrial structural change

ASAHI (Page 6) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

The Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) has launched discussions toward drawing up a "vision of industrial structure" for 2020. The first meeting of the Industrial Competitiveness Subcommittee of the Industrial Structure Council was held on Feb. 25. The subcommittee will meet about four more times and draw up a vision in May.

At the meeting on Feb. 25, METI gave a report on the present state and issues of Japan's industry, indicating that "the decline in Japan's economic power is a structural problem." Japanese companies used to enjoy around 80 percent market share for such products as liquid crystal display panels, DVD players, and lithium batteries, but their market share has declined rapidly from the second half of

the 1990s. The reason cited by METI is that while one or two companies typically monopolize each sector in Western countries or the Republic of Korea, multiple Japanese companies engage in fierce domestic competition, with a consequent delay in their overseas investments.

Japan's per capita GDP has dropped from number three in the world in 2000 to number 23 in 2008. METI believes that this is not a temporary phenomenon. It intends to include in the vision of industrial structure measures to strengthen the competitiveness of Japanese companies and to support overseas ventures of small and mid-sized businesses.

13) Takemasa: Australia's proposal is regrettable

ASAHI (Page 6) (Abridged)  
February 26, 2010

In connection with Australia's submission of a new proposal to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) requiring Japan to gradually discontinue its whaling in the Southern Ocean, Senior Vice Foreign Minister Koichi Takemasa said at a press conference yesterday: "It is regrettable that the proposal was submitted despite the fact that some progress has been made (owing to the chairman's new proposal)." Takemasa also indicated that his ministry will continue to make efforts to reach an agreement at the IWC annual meeting in June.

14) Research whaling likely to become source of diplomatic conflict; New Zealand may follow Australia

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 26, 2010

Japan's research whaling in the Southern Ocean and elsewhere is fomenting a fresh diplomatic conflict. This is because New Zealand has hinted that it could fall in line with Australia, which has

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insisted that it will bring a case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) if Japan rejects its call for gradual discontinuation of research whaling. With the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission coming up in June, maneuvering by each country will likely intensify.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada held a telephone conversation yesterday with his New Zealand counterpart, Murray McCully. During the conversation, Okada stressed: "We are disappointed at Australia's stance. We will continue to seek a diplomatic settlement through the IWC and bilateral talks." McCully then responded: "We share with Japan the position that a diplomatic settlement should take precedence."

Japan has enjoyed friendly relations with Australia and New Zealand. "The whaling issue is the only diplomatic thorn," said a senior Foreign Ministry official. However, if the issue becomes more serious, it could affect economic relations as well as joint efforts in such areas as nuclear disarmament. In order to adopt a new rule at the IWC annual meeting in June, approval of more than three-quarters of the 88 IWC member countries is required. There is fear that the issue may be protracted.

ROOS